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MAIL ORDER CUTS

Closures ordered across postal service

A swathe of closures across the sorting offices of Royal Mail are heralding a new round of major cutbacks, as the company's profits take a dive in the wake of deregulation.

Following a pre-tax loss of £279 million from last year, largely prompted by a major shift to private-sector companies in the profit-making package and business post sectors, regulator Postcomm have now raised the possibility of privatising the industry.

At the same time, it has been announced that sorting offices in Oxford, Reading and Swindon will be consolidated into a single Swindon site from June next year, and Crewe's sorting office could be set for closure with the loss of 600 jobs, if plans to merge the centre with Liverpool go ahead.

At Milton Keynes, postal workers claim that plans to close the centre there are well advanced, and have unanimously voted to take industrial action if an announcement is made which could jeopardise up to 500 jobs. It's rumoured that a merger could see Milton Keynes merge with Coventry and Northampton, affecting 1,400 roles.

In the post offices, continued threats to remove the service's right to handle benefits

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LENS CAP PAULINE CAMPBELL



Prisons campaigner Pauline Campbell, aged 60, has been found dead at the grave of her daughter Sarah. Pauline has been heavily involved in fighting for the rights of women prisoners for a number of years and was arrested 15 times for her activism, though was never charged. Her daughter committed suicide in Styal prison in 2003.

CHRISTIANITY DETERIORATING

The Anglican church is continuing to deteriorate under falling attendances, according to a new report. However evangelical membership, along with that of the Muslim and Hindu faiths, is continuing to rise, and belief is not falling at the same rate as attendance, according to Religious Trends, by Christian Research.

The report suggests that while four million people of all denominations attend church at least once a month today, this will decline to under one million by 2050, if current trends continue. Such a fall would be catastrophic for the finances of the church, which are already stretched.

The source of the Anglican church's falling attendance, along with its increasing financial problems and loss of cash for the clergy, is its demographic as an aging congregation, which seems unlikely to be replaced in the same numbers

by young people turning to religion for answers.

However seven in ten people still described themselves as Christian, according to a 2001 census, suggesting that while attendance is down, it is for pragmatic reasons rather than spiritual. Sunday opening has led to a dramatic drop-off of turnout as people turn to more entertaining pursuits.

Some commentators have questioned the findings, pointing out that today's inactive Christians are likely to become more active upon retirement, making the number of self-described Christians the more important measure.

In related news, the law of blasphemy has now been abolished, as an obscure piece of common law which banned attacks on the tenets and beliefs of the Church of England.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

AGENCY WORK: Fresh claims that agency workers should be given equal treatment within the first few weeks have emerged after a report found the average length of time such workers stay in their jobs is less than five months.

The report, *Agency Working in the UK: What do we know?*, said giving agency workers the same rights to permanent staff after a year would be too late for most.

The average length of tenure for agency workers is four and a half months, and 73% of workers employed through an agency stay with an organisation less than a year, according to the study.

ALCOHOL: Boris Johnson's first policy announcement as mayor of London, a pledge to ban alcohol on public transport, has come under fierce criticism after it emerged that the measure could not be implemented across the network. From 1st June, passengers can be ordered off Tube trains and buses if they consume alcohol while on board. However, staff admitted that there would not be regular patrols of carriages.

BONUSES: Despite huge uncertainty in the markets and calls for austerity from the workforce, city bonuses will still total £5.07 billion by 2009, according to a London thinktank. The figure is 40% below 2007's £8.51 billion payout, but has prompted the Bank of England to speak out against bonuses given to the architects of the credit crunch.

GM CROPS: Defra has given approval to Leeds University to conduct a research trial this year of GM potatoes. The research is on potatoes that have been genetically modified to resist infection by potato cyst nematodes.

HOUSING: Home repossession orders are nearing the level last seen in the early 1990s after rising by 16% in the first quarter of this year. The Ministry of Justice reports that 38,688 mortgage possession claims were issued from January to March this year, compared with 33,715 for the first quarter of 2007.

IMMIGRATION: A new directive to be voted by the European parliament on the 20th May could legitimise the detainment of immigrants in an irregular situation in detention centres for up to 18 months. The proposed directive also suggests that immigrants who have committed an 'administrative violation' could be held in prisons if detention centre places are not available, and be banned for re-entry for five years following their expulsion.

TAX: The UK government is 'particularly responsible' for illegal-trade related tax evasion because nearly half the world's tax havens are UK overseas territories, development charity Christian Aid has said. The charity estimates that 1,000 young people die every day because of the \$160 billion lost to third world countries as a result of the problem.

LENS CAP THE OLD SCHOOL TIE



A Labour activist who dressed up in top hat and tails to point out the upper-class heritage of the Tory candidate for the Crewe and Nantwich by-election was educated at Manchester grammar – one of the most exclusive fee-paying schools in the country. Norris is pictured here in his old school tie.

Blacklist casts its web online

Changes to data protection law could offer the legal loopholes necessary to allow a planned national blacklist to operate as it goes live at the end of May.

The National Staff Dismissal Register has been set up with the intention of alerting member companies to individuals accused or convicted of theft or fraud who apply for jobs. Companies signing up to the register include some big names, including Harrods, Selfridges and Reed recruitment.

Set up by Hicom Business Solutions, the database will be searchable by name, address, date of birth, national insurance number and previous employer.

Records on individuals will be kept for a five-year period and can include photos.

The initiative, run by a private company with links to Marks and Spencer, is going live at the end of May, and has been widely criticised by union and civil liberty groups, which have expressed concerns over possible victimisation and false accusations effectively being carried over to all further jobs a person might apply for.

Under the current Data Protection Act employers are not supposed to pass on information which could prejudice an

individual's employment prospects, expect to confirm whether they left voluntarily, or were sacked for misconduct. But changes to the Act would enable an organisation to process personal information to 'prevent fraud' – both alleged and prosecuted, potentially side-stepping the legislation.

Such a change would allow any company to act as an anti-fraud organisation, as long as the interpretation of fraud was broad enough, and other aspects of the DPA were met.

That Hicom are looking to this change as the basis of their new venture is backed by their own notes on the subject, which suggest that participating companies – designated as the 'data controllers', are required to restrict their content to fraud or theft rather than any other criteria.

Where particular concern is also being taken is in defamation law, where the company has taken pains to point out that companies should be able to show "sufficient evidence to support their interpretation" of any accusation.

The onus is thus being placed on companies to get their facts straight, rather than on the company – presumably to prevent wholesale defection in the event of a wrongful accusation on the site.



Poor hit as business walks free

Treasury won't plug tax holes

Even as the government admits to a £10 billion black hole in its finances caused by its gifting of tax back to businesses to plug their pensions holes, it looks set to U-turn on its policy to close corporation tax loopholes costing the exchequer tens of billions more every year.

Threats from major UK companies to relocate overseas or into tax havens has prompted a move to revise corporation tax rules following high-profile complaints that the UK's taxation levels are significantly higher than elsewhere in the EU.

Pharmaceuticals giant Shire recently announced it would relocate to Ireland to take advantage of the low tax regime there.

While UK law stipulates a basic corporation tax of 28%, corporations on average pay closer to 22%, with some of the largest

paying significantly under this figure.

A simplification of the rules mooted by the treasury last year would have closed loopholes which at present allow huge levels of tax evasion.

The UK has recently come under fire for itself maintaining more tax havens under British rule than anywhere else in the world, something which campaign groups argue has directly led to tens of thousands of deaths.

Corporate tax avoidance is thought to cost £25 billion every year – more than twice the amount these major companies were gifted by the government in tax breaks to allow them to refill the pension pots they themselves had emptied.

In two years, the same amount would pay for the total line of credit currently being offered to major banks as part of the credit crunch – £50 billion is being underwritten in loans to maintain the flow of money through the economy.

The same banks, along with a host of other companies, are already benefiting from government handouts this year to the tune of £10 billion, as they pour money into pension funds to keep them afloat. This money, rather than coming from profits or business chiefs who were the investors who caused the problem, is being paid in from taxes.

Pension deficits have soared by more than £100bn in the past year, the Pension Protection Fund said recently. Meanwhile, as the Treasury struggles to maintain its financial balance, fears are rising that the pensioners themselves could be at risk of falling prey to the 10p tax band changes which the government have proposed.

Up to 420,000 pensioners with small private pensions of up to £1,000 a year could start having to pay tax of £200 a year from next April, under new plans – potentially raising around £80 million a year.

Mail order cuts

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and pensions could eventually see far more than the current slate of 2,500 office closures.

Even the universal service is to be scrutinised, with Royal Mail boss Adam Crozier saying: "It is vital that we have the opportunity for a real debate ... and [we] share the belief as set out in the report that the Universal Service must be sustainable."

The report speculated that the financial position of Royal Mail is so bad that the universal flat-rate service may not be viable in future – Royal Mail are already lobbying the postal regulator to rescind some of its responsibilities.

Despite these massive cuts, which follow attacks on pensions, working conditions and

job numbers throughout the service, Royal Mail is also poised to ask for more money from the government.

As previously reported by *Freedom*, the financial problems of Royal Mail stem from New Labour's early take-up of European legislation designed to open national post services to competition. As the first country to take on the task, Labour opened up two of the most profitable sectors of the service, business post and packages, to competition, and banned Royal Mail from delivering at the same price as their competitors, while requiring them to deliver their competitors' post through the Royal Mail network. As a result, the international arms of mail monopolies and

private companies in other countries have been able to undercut prices in the UK while using Royal Mail assets to do so.

The result has been a disaster for Royal Mail, as companies have switched wholesale to private providers.

Other European countries have repeatedly put off going through similar processes, with the Dutch government declaring it wouldn't be opening its own markets as planned earlier this month.

The process was heavily criticised by postal workers and unionists, who noted that it would effectively destroy the financial viability of Royal Mail and the universal service before it was introduced in 2002.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Slick sales, damaged services

Speaking out against the abuse of care roles

Following *Freedom's* expose on the deteriorating conditions of workers in Social Care services in the previous issue, Martin Gilbert, joint author of *Anarchists in Social Work*, speaks out about the background of the crisis:

"These services at one time were nearly all under Town Hall control as part of Social Services departments. Privatisation started in 1982 following the Social Security Act. Before that time there were, and are, 'independent' (of Local Authorities) care agencies, known collectively to social workers as 'the voluntaries' – like the charities for disabilities or the NSPCC. In fact the voluntaries often had better service conditions and higher professional standards than Town Hall social workers.

"A limited example of how privatisation was, at times 'a good thing' is seen in the fostering of children, but in the main that worst invention of Thatcherism, carefully nurtured by the Blairites, has been a disaster.

"At one time, foster parents were all too often seen as a cheap way of getting children looked after, often with bad long-term results. Come privatisation and suddenly foster carers were given proper support, training, and payments.

"Inevitably however this led to people only running agencies for the money. One such company I worked for used to routinely sack its basic care worker staff before three months were up so that they could not go to Industrial Tribunals or blow the whistle!*



"'Cons' in the private sector have not been confined to child care services. Street cleaning, road mending, school meals, aspects of education and others all show the same pattern: slick sales-pitches to Town Hall purchasers of such services – who too often are managers managing more managers, none of them having enough experience at 'the client-face'.

"Initially, good results for the public are produced by the 'new management' of such services, even if they refuse to recognise trade unions.

"But gradually corners and wages are cut to meet the bosses' bottom-line. Complaints then hit the Town Hall managers, who try to shop around for better, cheaper services; having ditched the ones they once had direct control

over prior to the wonders of privatisation. Looking at these different situations, in various parts of Britain another common pattern emerges: a re-structuring of jobs, heralding a lessening of professionalism. In other words 'managerialism' has greatly complimented privatisation by the cutting of corners and wages to maximise company profits.

"It's done by getting employees to do only what 'the manager' sees as essential. Result: the deskilled worker and professional has less to offer the public and so has less bargaining power with the bosses. Genuine health and safety issues are also neglected as employees are reduced to interchangeable parts, shorn of pride in their work."

* See *Anarchists in Social Work* by Martin S. Gilbert et al, 2005

Darzi rolled out regionally

The first regional rollouts of Lord Darzi's plan for the NHS have taken place, as more detail comes to light about the minister's report on the future of the service, due out in June.

The East of England saw a launch which stressed a new 'consultative' approach from the government, which would give more weight to the input of professionals in their regions and patients, under a 'clinically driven, locally led' maxim.

Initially, the rollout has received good results, as a threatened service in Sudbury, Suffolk looked set to benefit from the official emphasis on local input, with assurances being made that Walnutree hospital would not be closing – following years of attempts from the local SHA under central guidelines.

Seven further strategic health authority reports are due in the next three weeks, culminating in Lord Darzi's final report.

However, an insistence from Darzi that London in particular should have poly-clinics, bringing things such as dentistry and GP services under one roof, continues to raise hackles among the medical profession, and a lack of assurance that further privatisation of the NHS won't occur has concerned union groups.

A draft London report was sent in mid-May to London's 31 PCTs.

Karen Jennings, from Unison, said: "When the final report is published, we want an NHS that is fit for the next ten years, not one that would be split by the private sector ethos of competition and profit," she warned.

The government are setting aside time to introduce a new NHS Reform Bill in the wake of the report, with Gordon Brown suggesting cash incentives for successful hospitals and a new NHS constitution.

Inspectors on strike

One thousand Ofsted workers walked out on 16th May in a dispute over pay, halting inspections of childcare services across England. The strike stopped inspections of nurseries, children's care homes, child-minding services and boarding schools.

They are protesting against the imposition of a divisive new pay structure, which will mean cuts for many workers, and a below-inflation pay offer – pushed through by Ofsted despite being overwhelmingly rejected by members of UNISON and PCS.

The strike saw rallies held in Manchester and London, and picket lines at offices in London, Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol. A wave of action short of strike is in progress, with members working to rule until the end of the month, along with a ban on overtime.

Members voted by two thirds for strike action, and by 87% in support of action short of a strike.

IN BRIEF

RAIL: 17,000 RMT members at Network Rail are being balloted for industrial action in two separate disputes.

Ballot papers are being sent to more than 12,000 infrastructure workers after they rejected an offer by a landslide margin of more than 100 to one. And some 5,000 signallers are rejected a 'cynical' offer of an additional 0.1% pay rise on the first year of a two-year deal. Both ballots conclude on 22nd May.

COMPUTERS: Up to 900 skilled jobs are threatened at Freescale Semiconductors. The plant in East Kilbride produces embedded chips to provide intelligence for products ranging from car engines to mobile phones.

This follows the announcement that JVC will move manufacturing operations to Poland at the cost of another 900 skilled posts in the area.

ENERGY: Millions of homeowners could see their energy bills increase by hundreds of pounds this year as British Gas moves to pass on soaring wholesale gas prices, which are claimed to be at the highest ever seen for the winter ahead. This could see annual domestic gas bills rising above £1,000, while food and petrol prices are also increasing sharply.

AIRPORTS: A sale of Gatwick and Glasgow airports is thought to be in the works, which would raise about £2.5 billion for owners BAA.

The company is in turmoil after being bought out by smaller group Ferrovial; if their credit rating slumps further half the company's bondholders, who own about £3 billion of debt, will be able to call in their money.

ARMS: Embattled UK arms dealers BAE – who were let off the hook over dodgy dealings with Saudi Arabia by Tony Blair – have now had two executives detained by US authorities investigating the £43 billion fraud.

DEBT: A debt advice charity is being overwhelmed by demands for help in some of the most affluent parts of the country. Transact said professionals and homeowners were unable to cope with their mounting debts.

In affluent areas such as Haywards Heath, West Sussex, and Congleton, Cheshire, there had been a 100% rise in the number of inquiries in the past year.

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Builders crack

The Office of Fair Trading last month accused 112 construction companies of inflating the cost of schools, hospitals and universities by secretly discussing the prices that they would submit to do the work.

According to OFT sources, an endemic culture of cover-pricing – deliberately stating a high price for work that they have no intention of winning so as not to get left off clients' future invitations to tender – increased building costs by 10% on average.

Councils and local authorities are now looking into launching legal action; although this will focus on specific contracts where

they suspect they were ripped off, already 37 companies have put their hands up to cover-pricing to receive leniency from the OFT.

The most serious charges are leveled at nine companies accused of divvying up work between them and paying compensation payments to the losing bidders.

These companies have been dubbed the 'Calorie Club', because of regular, secret meetings that they allegedly held where 'everyone gets fat'.

The club would meet in restaurants, hotels or bars and consisted of a core group of members, with other firms invited to join on an occasional basis.



French nuclear challenge

French nuclear energy company EDF may come under legal challenge in its choice to employ compatriots Areva. EDF's preference for Areva to build the reactors in Britain's next generation of power stations was announced without floating the job on the UK market, which may be illegal under EU competition law. Toshiba-Westinghouse, a rival reactor manufacturer, is understood to be exploring a variety of options to ensure proper competition.

EDF will be the largest player bidding for the 35% government share in British Energy. If successful it will be in strong position to acquire the rest of the private power stations in the country, and be central to plans for a nuclear power overhaul in energy over the coming decades.

To secure this deal EDF has been buying the surrounding farmland to the existing British Energy plant. It is unlikely they will build their own reactors if their bid fails, but instead they are probably holding the area ransom to receive a favourable offer, below the current share price.

In related news the GMB trade union has called for an enquiry after an EDF Energy employee was killed in an explosion at an electricity sub-station in Essex on Wednesday 7th May at 12.30pm while he was carrying out maintenance work.

Glen Holdom, GMB Organiser said, "This is the fourth regrettable fatality in EDF Energy Networks branch in a year. This is totally unacceptable".

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

IRELAND: three sacked airport shop stewards who called off a week long hunger and thirst strike on 11th April, after they received assurances from their union, Unite, that commitments made to them last September would be met, have resumed protest action at Transport House.

In a repeat of an action that last month led to the union calling the police to remove the protesters, Gordon McNeill occupied the awning at the front of the building on 16th May.

Gordon McNeill said: "We have learned that nothing the Unite leadership say can be trusted. Every member of the union would do well to note the way we have been lied to and fobbed off"

The previous hunger strike ended with a promise from the union that they would pay the outstanding legal bill for the long court action taken by the sacked workers against their former employer, ICTS. Unite also said that they would make an offer of compensation to the shop stewards for the hardship which the actions of the union leadership had put them through. All this was to have been done by 30th April.

The 30th April deadline passed without any movement by the Unite leadership on any of these issues. Instead, on 8th May, the shop stewards received a letter from the union solicitor which went back on all the previous promises that had been made.

ZIMBABWE: have lent their support to demands made by Cosatu for actions to be taken to protect the poorest layers of society from the effects of rising food prices, by raising social grants and minimum wages.

They have also called for a united front between South African and migrant workers as the only way to achieve these aims.

In a statement, they said: "We call on working class and poor South Africans to build alliances and structures of support with immigrants living in poor communities in South Africa. We call on the militant organisations of the South African working class to bring immigrants into their movements, to establish joint committees.

"In the face of hate-filled, mindless xenophobic attacks, immigrants have sought the protection of the police. We understand and respect this move. When our lives are threatened, we go where we can. But the police are no friends of immigrants.

"When Zimbabwean immigrants go so far as to ask to be repatriated to the country they fled, they show the true terror of xenophobia – terror that, in the end, hits all the workers and all the poor.

"In the face of such terror, we should do better than relying on our enemies. The robber capitalists and their armed wing, the state and its police, are our enemies."

LENS CAP ATHENS



A police car damaged earlier this month, claimed by Greek anarchists. In a communique, the attackers wrote: "Early in the morning of 16th May, without any special occasion we attacked the Police Station of Aigaleo (Athens). There is though a precise reason we did it and we will do it again. And this is the existence of police itself. We won't wait for any authority abuses to come to light, or when will the cops exceed their services discharging their guns, or whenever they torture in their police stations, trafficking drugs, raping prostitutes, etc. We break the silence and apathy of this society, and assault."

Activist journalists detained

Ecuadorian police detained five journalists associated with Ecuador Indymedia earlier this month. Four of the five were released from custody on 7th May. The government says that the four activists were detained because of their relationship with the fifth detainee, Ecuadorian resident and Colombian national Antonio Alcívar.

The government at first refused to issue a statement on the matter or inform the detainees of the reason for their arrests. The Regional Foundation for Assistance in Human Rights (INREDH) noted that this was a violation of the detainees' constitutional right to be clearly informed of the reason for their detention along with the identities of those who ordered and carried out the arrests.

According to INREDH, it is believed that Alcívar is being pursued by the Colombian

Administrative Security Department (DAS) for arms trafficking charges and is accused of having ties to the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group.

Ecuadorian prosecutors are charging Alcívar with using a false identity. The detainee apparently used four aliases.

Ecuador Indymedia accused the government of targeting journalists for their leftist organising and media work. They also emphasised that Indymedia – an international independent media platform open to a wide variety of contributors – cannot be held responsible for the activities of all of their collaborators.

Ecuador Indymedia contributors have been critical of Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's support for large-scale mining and a proposed Free Trade Agreement with the European Union.

Adapted from indymedia.org

Notes from the United States

On 2nd May a spectacular party was held in Miami, Florida. Its guest of honour entered the up-market banqueting hall to camera flashguns and a standing ovation from the 500 invitees all wearing lavish evening dress. They had met in public to express appreciation for what the 80-year old guest in a snazzy blue suit stands for. Feted and applauded, he lapped up awards as they were heaped on him and moved from table to table blowing kisses to the expectant diners. Eventually he

addressed the gathering loudly and clearly:

"We are coming to the end of a terrible stage. The end of our struggle is near."

The dinner was a public celebration of the way this man had overcome some of his recent difficulties. He had arrived in the United States in a fishing boat from Mexico, having been pardoned in 2004 by outgoing Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso after a period in prison there.

War for Motola Heights

A crisis in the Motola Heights in South Africa is deepening as violent intimidation by landlords against the poor community continues with the support of local police.

The community of Motola Heights, set on the edge of Pinetown. For the last three years it has been under sustained and violent attack from a local businessman who, it is claimed, seems to be able to direct the local state, including the police and the Municipality's Housing Department, at will.

The community is now made up of a wealthy suburb with the big new brick houses of the rich in the centre. Behind them are hidden the old tin houses of the poor families and, amongst the gumtrees up on the hill leading up to Kloof, a shack settlement. For some time local businessman and alleged gangster Ricky Govender has been buying up land and is being accused of using intimidatory tactics to illegally evict the poor.

His attempts to illegally drive out the mostly Indian families from the tin houses dates back to at least 2005. He has also been implicated in violent and illegal attempts by the eThekweni Municipality to evict the mostly African shack dwellers which date back to 2006.

The Municipality's criminal attacks on the shack settlement were officially stopped on 29 November 2006 when Abahlali base-Mjondolo went to court and won a court order interdicting the Municipality from carrying out illegal evictions. Since then however there have been various kinds of intimidation.

Govender's attempt to drive out the residents of the tin houses came to a head in August 2007 when he personally promised to bulldoze the house in which elderly couple James and



Gonum Pillay had been living for 25 years. After a campaign of intimidation including violence from Govender they went to court and were awarded an interdict preventing Govender from unlawfully evicting or intimidating them.

Since then they have not been evicted but they have been subject to constant intimidation.

The ongoing intimidation came to a head early in May this year when Leon Govender and some associates arrived at the Pillay's house. A teenage girl threw a knife across the fence at Mrs Pillay, an elderly woman, and threatened to assault her. Leon Govender's brother-in-law, Peter Singarum, threatened to kill James Pillay.

James Pillay called Bheki Ngcobo, the Deputy Chair of the Motola Heights Abahlali

baseMjondolo branch, for help. As Ngcobo arrived at the house Singarum tried to attack him with the pangas. Ngcobo called for further help. A large group of Abahlali members arrived. In response to an attempted attack with a panga a stone was thrown hitting one of the attackers at which point they all fled.

However the next day the Pinetown police arrived at the Pillay's house and informed James Pillay that he would be arrested – but could not specify a charge.

Pillay was also arrested on charges of assault and malicious damage to property. After his arrest Viljoen told him that "The blacks will be removed from the jondolos one by one whatever you people say. I'll make your life very difficult."

Adapted from libcom.org

Notes from the Unites States

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Hector Morales-George, a retired surgeon who attended the Miami dinner, said "He's a real hero ... He's been fighting for ... freedom ... since the day he arrived in the United States."

Who was this hero hitting the high spots so openly at the sold-out gala, his face showing the signs of heavy reconstructive plastic surgery?

None other than Luis Posada Carriles, the former CIA agent wanted in Venezuela for terrorism charges and still under a deportation order for illegally entering the United States three years ago, but released from a Texas prison in 2007 after a federal judge dismissed the only charges made against him in the US – for making false immigration statements.

Posada Carriles is a naturalised Venezuelan citizen who planned the bombing of a Cuban plane in 1976; all 73 on board were killed,

including a youth fencing team coming home from a tournament in Caracas. He is also behind a series of bombings of hotels in Havana in the late 1990s; one of these killed an Italian tourist. Posada has boasted of his efforts to kill Castro and – according to court documents – has been complicit in "some of the most infamous events of twentieth century Central American politics."

Evidence held by The Cuba Documentation Project show that Posada stayed in close touch with Washington handlers throughout his covert 'service'.

There must have been a ceasefire on Bush's war on terror on 2nd May. Two hundred peaceful protestors were arrested in New York four days after this party: they objected to the acquittal of three police officers for killing unarmed black man Sean Bell on the morning of what would have been his wedding day in November 2006.

Anti-fascists rally in Rome

An anti-fascist sit-in at the Piazza del Quatticciolo in Rome has been organised by the anti-fascist occupants of a former police building from the Social Laboratory Talpa, the Citizen Coordination of Fight for House and the Chamber Rome of the Federation of Communists Anarchici.

Other similar initiatives took place across other areas of the capital. It was attended by many young people of the district and had musical performance by rapper Quatticciolo. Rome has seen a rising level of fascist violence in recent years and anti-fascists have been facing harassment and bullying in the city.

In a statement by Luigi Fabbri, of the Anarchist-Communist Federation in the city, he said: "In the spread of this evil poison, all the highest institutions of power have responsibility, from the Catholic Church and its attacks on women's rights and homosexuals, to the campaigns of hatred and fear-mongering over terrorist attacks by migrants through a well-orchestrated media."

FEATURE

Social scientists under capitalis

Oliver Philpott examines the problems faced by academics in trying to build a better society with inferior tools

Despite the best intentions of academics it remains the case that certain institutional and ideological controls prevent true analysis of the state-corporate system which typifies our society.

In fact in the majority of cases, despite the tacit awareness of political and institutional barriers, scholars within the social sciences are neglecting their position of responsibility. In short, we are not asking the right kind of questions, the kind of questions that can help foster a more egalitarian society where power is placed firmly in the hands of the people.

There are a huge range of social ills which permeate our society, as well as societies abroad. Take for instance the widening economic divide, the housing crisis, continuing troubles in the Middle East, environmental disasters and the increasing threat of nuclear war. Such issues should be seen as global concerns. Indeed, there is an overt relationship, for example, between economic instability at home and the increasing threat of nuclear holocaust.

As academics we should be doing more to inform the public of the causes of such issues, for our very survival may depend on challenging existing forms of power and coercion. This brief article discusses the essential features of the state-corporate system and the role that education and the social sciences play in subverting public awareness.

It is recognised that in order to understand how the world works we have to look at it from the viewpoint of those who make the decisions. A view from the top will help us better understand oppression and our complicit involvement in it.

An unjust alliance

Although I am aware that socio-economic inequality is rife, I do not want to turn this into a debate about class. The current class system results from an unequal distribution of power. Corporations, business leaders and politicians seek to preserve their authority, control, prestige and wealth. More specifically, when ownership and decision making rests in the hands of the few, a serious undermining of democratic principles may follow.

So when our Government decides to go to war, against our wishes, killing thousands of innocent men, women and children we have a right to challenge. Power, authority and violence, "unless you can justify it, which is not easy", must be dismantled (Chomsky: 2002).

Writers such as Adam Smith would no doubt be appalled with the actions of corporations and politicians who are overwhelmingly silencing true public involvement within society (Bakan: 2004). The manufacturing of consent through the media, advertising and education is an unspoken violence, with very harmful consequences (Herman: 1994).

Many classical liberalists and libertarian socialists believed that industry, commerce, banking and other key societal features should be controlled by the citizens. The same people who work in the institutions and the communities. Therefore, foreign policy will be based on the interests of the communal majority.

What would Dewey say?

Educational reformer, John Dewey, believed that learning should not be restrictive. If a student is to reach their full potential then they must be allowed to find their own way, stand on their own two feet and think independently (Dewey: 1944). Upon first thought it may seem like education does foster independent, free thinking students.

A colleague of mine recently discussed her experiences in both the Russian and British educational systems. In a comparative overview she believed that there are vast differences between the two. She noted that in a Russian literature class students were required to memorise poems and were graded according to how accurately they recited them.

There was very little actual understanding and time for reflection. In contrast she considered that UK education was a lot more critical, encouraging the student to research independently. Whilst I agreed to an extent, in my experience any major diversion from the essential ideas being taught is highly frowned upon.

In fact rather than be rewarded for such an endeavour students often find their grades to be 'less than perfect'. However, it is not always the case. Some really good teachers recognise free thinkers. I mean why be restricted by what you are told? Why not challenge opinion? Why not make your own links to social 'theory'? Independent minds are fine, as long as they do not challenge the existing model. That would be ludicrous. Of course, many may just choose not to listen.

The social 'sciences'

Both corporate and Government sponsors realise the importance of the social sciences. After all, it's a human world which subjects like economics, sociology and history explore. Academics have a rich knowledge of human affairs and spend a considerable amount of time researching social life.

However, it is clear that these subjects are advancing the corporate agenda. Departmental websites frequently note that students will



Mark Achbar, Joel Bakan and Jennifer Abbott, make

learn skills which employers are looking for. But, one concerned anthropology graduate writing in the *Financial Times* points out that, "some academics are uneasy about the trend". She asks, "is it valid for anthropologists to use their skills to serve giant corporations and governments?"

Perhaps not but increasingly "in the UK, the 'people watchers' can be found not just pacing the corridors of blue-chip companies, but also the Ministry of Defence, Immigration Services, National Health

FEATURE

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rs of the film *The Corporation* based on Joel Bakan's book of the same name

Service and Foreign Office" (*Financial Times*, 2005).

Basically, sooner or later graduates need to realize that they have to go out there and get a job. Maybe it will be a job like marketing, teaching or the police which utilises many key skills learnt.

Or maybe it will be a job crunching numbers for a major trans-national firm. Either way the Universities are serving their primary function as socialisers of the (capitalist) thinkers, workers and managers of the future.

Social sciences are also an important tool in subversion. If academics say that something is true then it must be. Scholars are well aware that their research, institutions and subjects tend to favour big business.

The one major concern that I personally have with social science is its obsession with theory. Social life is complex enough as it is. What is the point in theorising whether something does or doesn't exist?

The hatred of 'common sense' is blinding us from the obvious, namely that sociology is

mostly based on a series of truisms. Moreover, there is a tendency to treat 'data' as lifeless. I am not suggesting that this creates a divide between people and academics but it can be easy to forget that there is a world out there beyond the confines of one's office, a world that we are part of.

People are extremely complex. Beyond the surface we know very little. It seems to me that if we are to truly understand why humans do the things we do then we have to consider more consciously innate features of the mind.

There is a growing awareness within the discipline that innate modules play an important role in action (Bone: 2005). Sociologists are slowly overcoming their fear of the psychological. In assessing life beyond the individual it is clear that we must start to look a lot more within the individual.

Reflection

It can be all too easy to forget that, as social scientists, we have a very close relationship to our subject matter. Such are the demands of modern academia that a deadline is always looming, whilst the constant stream of students' essays distract our attention from other immediate concerns such as journal writing, peer reviews or research projects.

Meanwhile we also have to maintain an appropriate balancing act between our home life and work life. Life as an academic, it seems, has never been harder. Yet we chose this role, we made this commitment and as social researchers we have a responsibility to report back on what is really happening in the world and how it is affecting the lives of individuals.

We may very well have careerist aspirations, which is absolutely understandable. However, let us not forget our commitment to people. We have the tools, resources and most importantly the time to assess social life. In short, as social scientists we have a relative degree of power which allows us to criticise the various features of state-corporate capitalism.

We do little to challenge the institutional orthodoxy, which ultimately serves elitist interests. For the sake of nations, let us do our job properly.

o.philpott@abdn.ac.uk

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COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Unfortunately it was a bit of a messy job this issue, as Matt has now left the collective and another editor was unable to do a section of the paper at late notice, meaning the international pages in particular ended up being a bit cobbled together – sorry about that.

It's a blow to lose Matt, who has been good to work with and helped keep the title fortnightly when otherwise it would have been unable to do so – good luck mate and keep in touch!

Next issue is also going to be a bit different from the norm, though for slightly different reasons – a good chunk of the editorial staff are going to be toddling off to Newcastle to enjoy the many delights of the Projectile Film Festival.

As a result, a good portion of the next paper may well be dedicated to reviews, interviews and news from the big weekend, leading to a slightly reduced news service – but lots of other interesting bits.

Hopefully we should be getting in yet more new people in the next couple of issues to get ourselves on an even keel, but as always, we're in need of help from a variety of different sources, be that from people who fancy being correspondents for their area or industrial sector, marketers, distributors etc., etc. Get in touch at the address below!

Rob Ray

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 7th June 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 29th May. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The official rate for food inflation is 7%. However, the cost of a typical supermarket trolley has gone up by 19% over the last year. No wonder people are feeling the pinch.

There are a number of reasons for this, chief of which is the rising price of oil. It is not stretching things too far to say that we effectively eat oil. It is a vital ingredient in the fertilisers needed to keep yields up. Much of our food is transported halfway across the world – all of which takes oil. Shipping parsnips in the summer all the way from Australia probably looked like good economics when oil was a few dollars a barrel, but it can hardly make sense now. The price of oil is unlikely to come down much anytime soon, so this factor in rising food prices won't go away.

Another factor is the competition for food. Grain is being diverted to biofuels, aided by subsidies in the USA and EU. A further factor is the impact of climate change – Italy for example saw the lowest rainfall for a century – as well as protest against the rising costs of basic foodstuffs like pasta. Extreme weather like the Burmese cyclone doesn't just kill people – it also destroyed the local farmers' rice that they had saved for seed, as well as devastating fields for this year's crop.

And put bluntly, if there is competition for food from other sources, such as drivers, they will have more buying power than the poor.

The impact of rising food prices is not felt equally. In Britain, the statistics say we

spend on average 8.3% of our disposable income on food, though that figure masks gross inequalities. In China, it is 28.3%, Russia 36.7%, India 39.4% and Indonesia 49.9%. If prices of basics rise by 10 or 20%, the impact is harder the poorer you are. The figures above are averages – which means that many people are paying far more than that percentage of their income just to eat, I know I'm paying significantly more than 8.3%!

It seems to me that there is little that can be done on the overall price rises – any response needs to be about making sure that the pain of food price rises doesn't fall disproportionately on the poorest. In domestic terms, it means eating less processed food and getting things in season, as well as looking out for bargains and using street markets. It's also well worth revisiting the working class tradition of thrifty cooking. As part of that, perhaps we can do something about the staggering amount of food thrown away in this country – up to a third of all food bought.

But we also need to respond collectively – by demanding a bigger share of the cake. That doesn't mean just pay, though that helps. Markets and a range of choices in an area help keep the cost of food down. Allotments allow people, especially those without gardens, to grow some of their own food. It's criminal that they are being turned over to developers all over the country.

Blog Bites

(from thebristolblogger.wordpress.com)

The Blogger wrote a letter recently to *Venue** in response to an article on local bloggers, which featured this blog. Of course I can't link to the actual article because they still don't put their editorial on the internet.

They featured a fairly random selection of blogs although, oddly, the article was fronted by two Tory blogs – James Barlow and Charlotte Leslie – while they found no space for Labour's Kerry McCarthy, one of the few blogging MPs in the country.

Of The Blogger, they said because it's written anonymously it wasn't accountable, which elicited this response:

Thanks for the free plug in the blog article last week.

I was a bit bemused, however, by your claim that the Bristol Blogger 'is anonymous and therefore unaccountable...'

How does that work then? The last time I looked bloggers are subject to exactly the same laws – slander, contempt, copyright etc. – as any other publication such as yourselves.

And let's be honest, even the dim and overpaid Oxbridge tossers at Carter Fuck and Partners or any other set of fancy city libel lawyers could find out who I am in the

space of two phone calls if they needed to.

As for public accountability; while it ain't perfect, I'm directly accountable to the public through the operation of an open and unmoderated comments system on my blog, which – as far as I can tell – is vastly more accessible and directly accountable to the public than anything offered by yourselves.

However much you ostentatiously publish your bylines and talk about accountability, the truth is that you – like any corporate-owned media – aren't accountable to the public in the slightest. You're actually accountable to a group of wealthy and anonymous Northcliffe shareholders aren't you?

Oh, and when are you going to put your magazine on the internet?

Regards,

The Bristol Blogger

So guess what happened? The self-styled experts on media ethics didn't print it! So much for their accountability and my right of reply then.

* *Venue* magazine is an events and culture magazine based in the Bristol and Bath areas. Self-consciously hip, it sells itself as a local *Time Out*.

The struggle for paradise

In his comment on Jones's book, *Coral*, (review, 2nd March) Iain McKay attempts to put him down by attacking his dates for Kropotkin. Whether Ian is right or not over this Jones's understanding of zoology is less easy to fault.

The trouble is really that the Dead Anarchist Society will not have word said against Kropotkin and other worthies. Ian tells us that Kropotkin was well aware of "nature's struggle" where animals fight for survival. That goes without saying. For a moment Kropotkin and Jones looked as though they were going to linking arms to walk down the rosy evolutionary path. The struggle, Iain says, is seen within society. People such as Spencer have pointed this out. Anarchist and others are acutely aware of the struggle between the villainous bosses and hero workers in capitalism. Donald Rooum, *Freedom's* back page cartoonist, has an animal iconography to this illustrate struggle. Orwell's blueprint for a successful State, *Animal Farm*, uses animals. We happily accept that struggle embraces all species and Jones makes this point.

The struggle is explained by Darwin and friends, the Dead Biologist Society: I struggle, you struggle we all struggle. The Big Idea that Ian, other anarchists and even the dastardly sociobiologists trumpet is, "It need not be that way!" The now somewhat soiled white rabbit they pull of the out of the hat in *Mutual Aid*. Jones's real crime is that he does not endorse this view. He says the struggle is for dominance through exploitation. He is right. There is no such thing as mutual aid and cooperation. The algae and polyps of corals do not celebrate a successful cooperative union. One exploits the other. This exploitative struggle extends to the organelles of our body. In old age this can lead to one group of cells breaking free from the control others and this results in cancer.

Kropotkin, social scientists and Iain have got it wrong. Most anarchists cannot accept that people are motivated by self interests because that, as they see it, is capitalism. They appear schizophrenic. They wish to believe in the individual who "stands alone and defies convention" and chummy cooperation. Iain falters by admitting that mutual aid is an expression of self interest. This, however, is sophistry. He clearly believes that mutual aid depends on liking one another sufficiently to give up any possibility of gain. This Big Idea is twaddle. A mother will eat her babies if it is to her advantage. Iain would have mutual aid as a powerful tool for the workers to use against their bosses. The problem is that as soon as the Works have torn the Bosses to pieces they turn on each.

To see people and other animals as a never ending struggle is more realistic than a belief in an anarchist novena dependent on mutual aid. It is not bleak, it accepts reality. We are actually there. It doesn't get better but then it doesn't get worse. Jones is right. The struggle is a description of events which

is driven by genes. Our behaviour, intellect and concepts simply assist in the struggle. The reason for the struggle is an individual's need to gain fitness: leave its genes to the next generation. A failure to achieve this is extension.

Peter Gibson

Ed's note: Doubtless Iain will add to this if he feels the need to, but frankly, given your own penchant for the individualist anarchist Max Stirner (152 years gone and counting), I don't think you're in much of a position to harp on about 'Dead Anarchist Societies', Peter.

No-one in their right mind has ever suggested that people are not motivated in the main by their own self-interest. But it would be the height of stupidity to suggest that this is the sum total of humanity's activity. People have made extraordinary sacrifices – deportations, whippings, killings – throughout history for not just their loved ones, but for those who had yet to be born.

I'm a young man, but I've seen people barely weeks away from retirement raring to get on the picket lines to protect the jobs and wages of their co-workers, others taking big chunks out of their pension to give younger colleagues the chance of a career. The logic of self-preservation is strong, but it is not the only motivator in our species.

To say mutual aid does not exist it to deny a major – and many would say the best – part of our history as a species, something which has lifted us out of the muck time and time again.

Krishnamurti and anarchism

In reply to Brian Morris (*Freedom* letters, 2nd March) I must be brief: when that issue reached me I had only an hour or two if I wanted to catch the next (*Ed: Sorry we're a bit behind in publishing everyone!*).

I appreciate his measured response to my rather cross reflections, but I have to say that

Krishnamurti's position, as I understand it, was (a) that a total radical change in human consciousness is urgently necessary, and (b) that, as everything that is happening, in ourselves and outside ourselves, is integral to a single, unitary movement, or process, or flow of all happenings, there is absolutely nothing we can do, by conscious deliberate effort to bring about a change.

Change in our consciousness can only happen, as everything else does, as part of the uncontrollable flow, that is, only when we happen to become deeply interested, and so happen to see the truth for ourselves.

If that is right, then obviously 'social or direct action', 'class struggle', and 'social engagement' cannot bring about this necessary change. Follow the Tao and stop worrying!

Francis Ellingham

Good article

I loved the article on the demise of Respect (2nd February). Well written and well researched. For more background on George Galloway, his speech in praise of Saddam and the million missing from his so called charity, do a search on the website of American journalist Greg Palast at gregpalast.com.

Keep up the good work, slowly warming to the new format

Mike

New style

Many congratulations on producing a wonderfully stylish *Freedom*. It is a breath of fresh air! It looks so professional and is far beyond any expectations I have of the new format. The content is beautifully balanced. I cannot praise you too highly! You have really thought very deeply and with great foresight into what you have produced. This is a major achievement. I cannot congratulate you enough!

Graham Hall

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Thought crime gets 20 years

Green scare prisoner Eric McDavid has been sentenced by US District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. to 19 years and seven months in prison.

Eric was found guilty of conspiring to destroy the property of the forestry service, mobile phone masts and power plants. At the point of his arrest he hadn't actually damaged anything and was merely, allegedly, thinking about carrying out these actions.

Supporters write: "In a case of blatant FBI misconduct and entrapment this is an outrageous sentence for someone who has been charged with nothing more than a thought crime."

"Sentencing a man to just under 20 years imprisonment for a thought crime is a total outrage and we encourage everyone to support Eric by sending him urgent letters of support."

Meanwhile it is absolutely critical that we give support Eric. Check out his support website at supporteric.org for more details.

Write to: McDavid, Eric x-2972521
7E128, Sacramento County Main Jail, 651
'I' St., Sacramento, CA 95814, USA

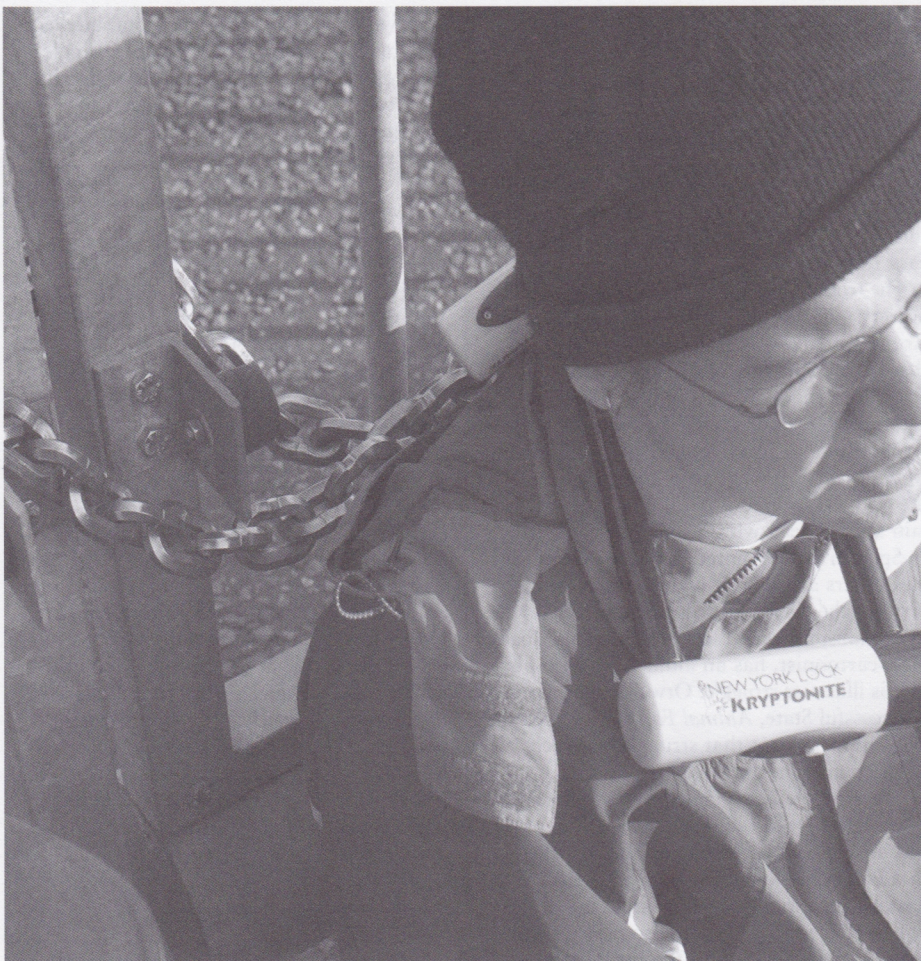
Marie Mason trial date

A tentative trial date for green scare prisoner Marie Mason has been set for early August. With the possibility of a trial only a few months away, please keep in mind that time is of the utmost importance.

Marie's attorney has asked for articles on the subjects below. While digital format is preferred, any format will be accepted. Please email any relevant info to freemarie@riseup.net or mail to the address below. Marie needs all the help and support she can get right now. Please do what you can. Check out midwestgreenscare.org for more support ideas. They are requesting that any articles sent be from mainstream media or science sources for enhanced credibility, and on the following topics:

- The dangers and limitations of GMO foods/crops.
- Specifically, the work that Catherine Ives was doing at MSU around 2000.
- Greenspace and global warming (buffering action). These could also be passed on to Maketewah for their work on the anti-development campaigns. Maybe the city of Toledo would be a source, as they are developing a greenspace policy.
- Deforestation, or generally about imminent environmental collapse (Joseph Speth, Naomi Klein are some recent 'credible' authors).
- Recent cases that might help with sentencing advice (i.e. non-political arson cases, vandalism cases) for comparison.
- A transcript of Rod Coronado's 1995 MSU related trial, specifically the presentation by Rod's attorneys about who Rod was politically.

Write to: Got Your Back, c/o Friends of Marie Mason, PO Box 19065, Cincinnati, OH 45219, or see midwestgreenscare.org



● One of London's newest community groups, Action Eastend (for Community & Solidarity) has been announced in East London, or to be more precise geographically, Tower Hamlets and Newham.

A member stated: "We were born out of a call for anarchists and libertarians to get more focused on the needs of our class in the areas where we resist the encroachment of both the local authorities and private finance. In East London this means bringing about grass-roots opposition to the Olympic Swindle, fighting gentrification and supporting independent initiatives which increase the combativeness of our class with such as campaigns as LCAP."

"We will be looking at raising awareness and seeing what roadblocks we can be put in place against the Olympic juggernaut as it threatens both the environment and the social fabric of our communities. In this endeavour we would ask for help London-wide and further afield."

Contact superfly666x@googlemail.com

● Following recent protests, a meeting to fight private sector involvement in higher education was organised at the University of Manchester, attended by around 50 people.

The Education Worker Network, affiliated to the anarcho-syndicalist SolFed, have heard that a brand new building complex at the university will be using private security at night instead of university staff. This adds to the increasing use of agency staff.

The agreement on no compulsory redun-

dancies at the university is also due to run out later in the year.

To contact the EWN email ewn@ewn.org.uk

● The Second Birthday of Camp Titnore was celebrated on 24th May. The eco-protest site, which is aiming to save pristine woodlands from overdevelopment, has had some remarkable successes in stopping building work at the site.

See reewebs.com/titnore

● On Tuesday 6th May, thirty protesters from Earth First! shut down the BASF UK headquarters at Cheadle Hulme near Manchester (see picture above), to take action against the company's role in GM crop research.

Activists used their vehicles to block the driveway whilst a team of eleven people with lockon tubes took the ground in front of the long gate and others D-locked several side gates.

Some people spoke to the guard, who wanted to shut the gate. The activists happily complied... Away went the armtubes and out came the heavy duty D-lock and motorbike chain, which were fixed to the now firmly closed gate with an activist locked on to it.

Dates and the rough region of the next Earth First! gathering of environmental activists have been announced as 27th August to 1st September in Norfolk. For more updates go to earthfirstgathering.org.uk or email summergathering@earthfirst.org.uk

Bernard Lazare

Lazare Marcus Manassé Bernard (1865–1903), better known as Bernard Lazare, French-Jewish literary critic, political journalist and polemicist, was a prominent figure in the Dreyfus affair and a philosopher of Jewish national renaissance.

Born into a bourgeois, assimilated Jewish family in Nîmes, Lazare became involved in the Symbolist movement in Paris in 1886, co-editing avant-garde magazine *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires* (Political and Literary Discussions) which regularly carried the work of both symbolist poets and libertarian writers. In the early 1880s he became actively involved in the French anarchist movement. Although he never engaged in direct action, he defended anarchist ideas in mainstream literary magazines and newspapers and contributed regularly to the libertarian press, notably Jean Grave's anarcho-communist weekly, *La Révolte*. He continued to support anarchism's ideals and his comrades, regularly financing anarchist publications and legal defences.

It was as an anarchist that Lazare first became a literary critic and journalist. During the trial of the thirty (1894), he defended the anarchists Jean Grave and Félix Fénéon, and the following year covered the miner's revolt in Carmaux for the *Echo de Paris*. At the 1896 Socialist Congress in London he denounced Marx as "a jealous authoritarian, unfaithful to his own ideas, driving the Internationale away from its goals".

Lazare is best known to many for his work as a scholar of anti-Semitism. In the spring of 1894 he published his study of the origins of anti-Semitism entitled *Anti-Semitism, its History and Causes*. In it he identified the roots of Jewish persecution in the unique characteristics of Jewish Diaspora existence, blaming the insularity and exclusivity of Diaspora Jewry at least in part for their own misery.

Though this almost inevitably attracted accusations of anti-Semitism on Lazare's part, during the 1890s he became one of the first and most vocal critics of the conviction of Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus who had been accused of treason. Having been contacted by Mathieu Dreyfus to help prove his brother's innocence, Lazare devoted his time exclusively to the case, and in November 1896 published his paper *The Dreyfus Affair – A Miscarriage of Justice in Belgium*, in which he refuted the accusations against Dreyfus point by point and demanded the sentence be overturned.

Due to this experience with anti-Semitism, Lazare subsequently became engaged in the Jews' emancipation struggle. He was warmly received at the First Zionist Congress and subsequently chronicled Jewish persecution in Europe. After visits to Romania in 1900 and 1902 he reported on the experience of Romanian Jewry in Paris-based socialist newspaper *L'Aurore* (The Dawn). He later visited Russia where he reported on the dangers



facing the country's Jewish population, and Turkey where he defended the Armenians against persecution. In *Pro Armenia* (1898) he denounced the Basle Zionist Congress for publicly honouring sultan Abdülhamid II: "Representatives of the oldest of persecuted peoples" he wrote, "whose history cannot be written, but in blood, send their salutations to the worst of assassins".

While remaining hostile to the idea of a Jewish state, Lazare came to endorse Zionism. From 1892 he was in contact with Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) founder Achad Ha'am, and he travelled and corresponded with Zionist leader Theodor Herzl. The two later fell out after a disagreement over the Zionist project, a project of whose "tendencies, processes and actions" Lazare disapproved. In 1899 he wrote to Herzl – and by extension to the Zionist Action Committee – accusing him of being "bourgeois in thoughts, bourgeois in your feelings, bourgeois in your ideas, bourgeois in your conception of society".

For Lazare, Zionism was an ideal of emancipation and of collective organisation

of the Jewish proletariat, and he remained vehemently unsympathetic to the then small minority of Zionists calling for the institution of a Jewish state. While he supported the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, he argued that, once there, the Jews "must live once again as a nation, or more closely like a free collectivity, but only on the condition that the collectivity not be modelled after the capitalistic and oppressor states in which we live".

After the Dreyfus trial in Rennes, censorship from the Dreyfusardes meant that he could no longer write for *L'Aurore*, but he covered the trial anyway and sent his accounts to American journals *The Chicago Record* and *The North American Review*.

Lazare died on 1st September 1903, aged 38, after undergoing surgery for colon cancer. He left an unedited Manuscript, *Job's Dungheap* (Le fumier de Job), and authorised the republication of *Anti-Semitism, its History and Causes* on the condition that the preface state "my opinions have changed on many points".

James Horrox

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MAY

28th Nick Heath will be giving us his take on the events of 1968 from an anarchist perspective, from 7pm at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, 020 7837 4473.

29th Worthing Alliance meeting upstairs at The Rest, Bath Place, Worthing, at 8pm.

31st Demonstration At Heathrow, a spring carnival of resistance to airport expansion, details to be announced, see hacan.org.uk, campaigncc.org or notrag.org for more

JUNE

1st to 21st Haringey Sustainability Weeks, as part of the London-wide initiative there will be a range of green events in parks, schools, halls, the street and in workplaces in order to spread green ideas far and wide throughout the borough, for more details visit sustainableharingey.org.uk

3rd Archive work nights at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 from 7pm – no experience needed, just willingness to shuffle papers and sort leaflets, meet the nerds at 56a, drink tea and destroy capitalism (slowly)!! See 56a.org.uk/archive.html

4th Carnival Against the Arms Trade.

National mass demo against EDO MBM, wear red and bring whistles, drums etc., meet at The Level in Brighton at 12 noon, see smashedo.org.uk

5th SolFed London social drink, from 7.30pm at the Rose & Crown, Colombo Street, SE1 – come along and share a pint, politics and plenty of pleasant company.

23rd to 28th International Anti-Nuclear Festival at Eurajoki in Finland, close to Olkiluoto which is the the nuclear plant and building site of the world's biggest nuclear reactor, see olkiluoto.info/en for details

JULY

4th Independence from America, demonstrate at the US spy base, Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire from 5pm until 10pm, call 01423 884076 or mobile 07949897906, email percy@starbecj.eclipse.co.uk or see caab.org.uk for details

7th to 9th G8 Summit at Toya Lake, Hokkaido in northern Japan, for details see <http://linux7.sanpal.co.jp/no-g8>

AUGUST

4th to 11th Climate Camp at e.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent, with day of action against agrofuels on Wednesday 6th and a day of mass action on Saturday 9th August, see climatecamp.org.uk

7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see nggonline.org.uk

13th to 18th Earth First! Summer Gathering, those involved (or who want to be) in radical ecological direct action get together for five days to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's going on, what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire, see earthfirstgathering.org.uk

PAMPHLET

Anarchism and the Wider Left

by Laurens Otter

Wrekin Anarchist Group Press, £5.50

I have long carried a secret suspicion that Laurens Otter was either a Martian or else like the immortal McCloud in Highlander was 2,000 years old and indestructible. I came to this conclusion from listening to and reading his work. Laurens' knowledge of movements and people, philosophies, theories and theorists is so concise and thorough to be scary. Not only does he have insights into the most obscure facts and details, he also seems to have an incredible knack of either being at some major political turning point of history or theory and organisation or of knowing all the major players personally. Having once broached the question of the ethnic origins of the Northumbrian people, Laurens was able to instruct me not only in the major tribes and their ancestry but the tribal chiefs and the historic trajectory of their family offspring. I did ask, but he denied actually being there himself. More recent periods will find Laurens somewhere in the frame.

Nothing in this current work would allay my suspicions. It is a monument of social anthropological and political history of the left. The detail is so precise, the movements traced down to individuals and movements, social and political backgrounds, with the evolution and trajectory of their ideas mapped and followed. This is masterly work. Without undue fanfare it sweeps aside any assumptions the reader might have on

anarchism and disperses the 'anarchist orthodoxy' which appears to have been developing over the last forty years. Laurens wastes no time in setting out what anarchism is instead he traces the movements and ideas which reflect the basic values of that ideology. In the process he demonstrates how varied and diverse are ideas held to be anarchist, claimed to be anarchist or are in essence 'anarchist'. The broad umbrella of that set of values has covered many diverse thinkers and organisation and tells us if we didn't already know there is no one true gospel according to the anarchists. Some who have held that title either abandoned it for its opposite or else really shouldn't have been termed anarchists in the first place, while those, Christians, Communists and revolutionary Marxists who didn't adopt the term in essence were as anarchist as damn it.

For those who love tracing where things come from, ancient beginnings and winding lost back lanes of political thought, and isolated hamlets of ideology this book is a spell binding journey. Indeed I would say this is the best book I have ever read on the subject of anarchist ideas and movements. It is printed and hand stapled in the old hand duplicator, knocked out on the big Imperial typewriter onto stencils style of the '60s and '70s and loses absolutely nothing for that.

David Douglass

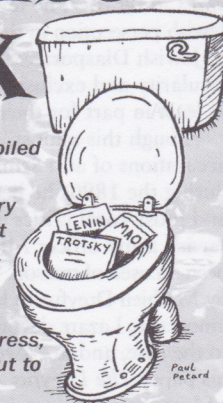
Anarchism and the Wider Left by Laurens Otter is available from wrekinstopwar.org (email wrekinstopwaradmin@blueyonder.co.uk) at £5.50 post paid.

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. American Motors Corporation. It was part-owned by Renault, whose chairman, Georges Besse, was assassinated by Action Directe in 1986. The rest of the Renault board took a different strategy and sold its share to Chrysler, who also bought the rest of the company.
2. Strikes. In *Babylon 5* there was a space station dock workers strike. In *Battlestar*

- Galactica* the strike is over safety.
3. Both were spies infiltrating campaigns, Kendall infiltrated Plane Stupid and Hands Off Iraqi Oil, until he was spotted as a fake; Schlickerrieder worked for Shell in the 1990s by infiltrating campaigns against their activities in Nigeria.
4. Mexico in 1917.

A faceless society

The video artwork *Faceless* follows the logic of total surveillance to a chilling conclusion. Tom Jennings admires its ambition.

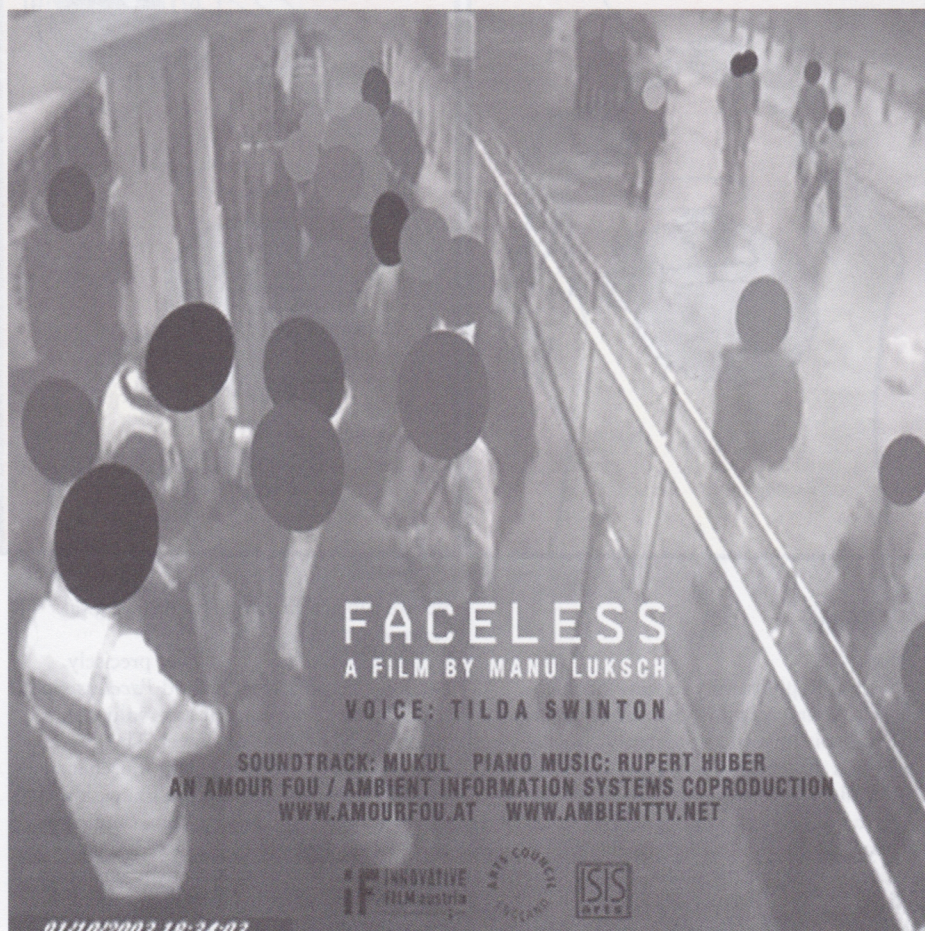
The Data Protection Act supposedly safeguards against abuse by making transparent what information about us private and state agencies collect. Its scope was widened in 1998 to include visual imaging, in recognition of the epidemic of CCTV systems across the UK (now the internal surveillance capital of the world). Crime prevention budgets increasingly drain into their manufacturers' profit margins – despite demonstrably marginal reductions in offences – with their sinister centrality in New Labour's integrated database and ID card plans threatened only by government and IT-provider bungling. But apart from the usual suspects, the wider British public seem remarkably acquiescent to all prospective intrusion. Are we really bewitched by anti-social terror hype, hypnotised by spectacular media, wrong-footed by the seductions of virtuality, and domesticated by reality TV? To riff on Dr Strangelove, have “we learned to stop worrying and love Big Brother”?

Perplexed by all this, London-based media art group Ambient TV (pioneers of free wireless internet access) decided in 2002 to expand their Spy School experiments – rendering visible and dramatising the hitherto hidden assemblages of data held on citizens – into a fully-fledged visual artwork composed entirely of material plucked from this matrix. It would be entitled *Faceless*, emphasising the DPA stricture that individuals deemed uninteresting have their features obliterated, while those remaining are targeted for action. According to the essay accompanying its production:

“Physical bodies leave data traces: shadows of presence, conversations, movement. Networked databases incorporate these traces into data bodies, whose behaviour and risk are priorities for analysis (by business, by government). The securing of a data body is supposedly necessary to secure the human body (either preventatively or as a forensic tool)”.*

Exactly what security might mean in this context, and for whom, would be the subject-matter of the work questioning the social significance and implications of surveillance society.

Collective founder Manu Luksch then embarked upon a performance odyssey within range of countless CCTV cameras across London, Leeds and Newcastle, submitting requests under the DPA for copies



of the resulting recordings. Subsequently incorporated into a fiction feature film, only ‘natural’, ‘found footage’ was used, with no artificial lighting or other cinematic contrivances – even the storyline itself fitted the philosophical framework used to justify and regulate official snooper. The project was very nearly scuppered by the overwhelming incompetence, ignorance, and/or evasion of local council and corporate culprits in discharging their responsibilities – often disingenuously pleading ‘disproportionate effort’. That scarcely sufficient clips were received was exacerbated by the tautological 2004 DPA amendment specifying ‘personal data’ to only encompass ‘biographical’ information. Nevertheless, five years later, a finished *Faceless* was finally unveiled in exhibition across the country and abroad.

Ghosts in the New Machine

Following the self-imposed Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers, only minimal processing was applied to the footage received – matching colour tones and intensities and masking some images in stitching together this ‘science-fiction fairytale’. Yet the effect is surprisingly beguiling despite the abject visual quality of much of the material. The more aesthetically problematic distorted perspective and stilted

movement are assimilated into the filmic rhythm, juxtaposed with sequences of Ballet Boyz-choreographed dance and cycling children whose grace symbolising unofficial activity counterpoints the prevailing paranoid estrangement. Tilda Swinton’s regal voiceover and Mukul Patel’s haunting soundtrack complete an impressively original artwork, bold in design and dogged in realisation if, ultimately, confused in narrative thrust.

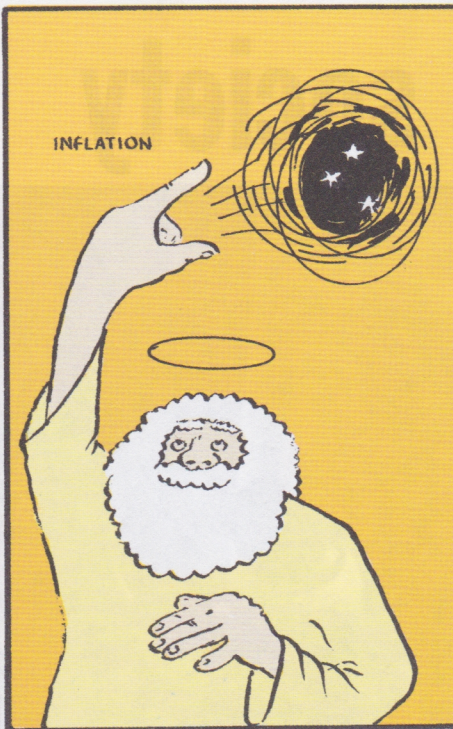
Our tragic protagonist (necessarily ‘played’ by Luksch herself) lacks reflexivity or emotion beyond the narcotising flow of interaction with the ubiquitous New Machine. Then, a sudden discovery: she has a face! – which, as in her job as data monitor, signifies a disturbance to the status quo destined to be corrected in the interests of stability and security. With personal identity come fragments of memory or fantasy, prompting imaginative awareness of possible pasts and futures along with uncertainty and fear. Exploiting her newly incipient agency, the quest to evade oblivion is enlivened by encounters with the mysterious Spectral Children whose joyful unpredictability confounds the surveillance apparatus. Sadly, they give disastrous advice to trust her instincts,



THE BIG BANG

ORIGIN OF THE COSMOS

story by Albert Adler
pictures by Roodum



Review

◀ page 15

but with no opportunity to develop such skills she soon succumbs to re-zombification.

This dispiriting and apparently conclusive fatalism is misleading, however, since the pivotal black boxes of social engineering here are the reprogramming centres initially necessary for brainwashing into numb passivity – and not the global data-web itself (policed for deviation as administrative corollary). But how these function – or not, permitting some to escape – is withheld from viewers, thereby disabling our suspension of disbelief. Fittingly, perhaps, the logistical nightmare of planning a coherent storyboard against the vagaries of CCTV operators complying with legislation (in exemplary exposure of the fiction of state-dispensed ‘rights’) mirrors the impossibility of convincingly sketching dystopian citizens

whose subjectivities merely echo digital representations.

The fairytale fails to satisfy precisely because the principles behind *Faceless* were too rigorous, in taking at face value (as it were) the viewpoint of power. The government’s scientific fantasy of comprehensive knowledge of the population likewise makes scant human sense, whereas its omnipotent thirst for control will be far more pragmatically baleful. The film’s major artistic weakness therefore signals crucial (though unacknowledged) political potential. As its makers conclude: “The panopticon is not complete, yet. Regardless, could its one-way gaze ever assure an enabling conception of security?”* Clearly, neither that nor a secure ability to conceive. The ghosts in the machine may thus still have an edge.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* Manu Luksch & Muku Patel, ‘Faceless: Chasing the Data Shadow’, *Variant* magazine, No. 31, pages

10–12, 2008 (www.variant.org.uk; further information at www.ambienttv.net). For discussions of the wider context, see contributions to *Mute* magazine, Vol. 2, No. 7, 2008, ‘Show Invisibles? Migration, Data, Work’ (www.metamute.org).

THE QUIZ

1. Which US auto corporation ended up being bought by Chrysler after a Marxist group assassinated a French industrialist?
2. What have featured in the science fiction programmes *Babylon 5* and *Battlestar Galactica*, but are usually not found in science fiction?
3. What links Toby Kendall and Manfred Schlickerrieder?
4. Where was the right to strike first constitutionally enshrined?

Answers on page 14

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der capitalism



Mark Achbar, Joel Bakan and Jennifer Abbott, makers of the film *The Corporation* based on Joel Bakan's book of the same name

learn skills which employers are looking for. But, one concerned anthropology graduate writing in the *Financial Times* points out that, "some academics are uneasy about the trend". She asks, "is it valid for anthropologists to use their skills to serve giant corporations and governments?"

Perhaps not but increasingly "in the UK, the 'people watchers' can be found not just pacing the corridors of blue-chip companies, but also the Ministry of Defence, Immigration Services, National Health

Service and Foreign Office" (*Financial Times*, 2005).

Basically, sooner or later graduates need to realize that they have to go out there and get a job. Maybe it will be a job like marketing, teaching or the police which utilises many key skills learnt.

Or maybe it will be a job crunching numbers for a major trans-national firm. Either way the Universities are serving their primary function as socialisers of the (capitalist) thinkers, workers and managers of the future.

Social sciences are also an important tool in subversion. If academics say that something is true then it must be. Scholars are well aware that their research, institutions and subjects tend to favour big business.

The one major concern that I personally have with social science is its obsession with theory. Social life is complex enough as it is. What is the point in theorising whether something does or doesn't exist?

The hatred of 'common sense' is blinding us from the obvious, namely that sociology is